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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30, 1910.

Mr. Hitchcock's Activities.

A feeling is growing in well-informed circles that the Hon. Frank Hitchcock's political activities are not doing the administration the least bit of good.

In fact, it is putting the case now too strongly to say that it is generally believed that his activities are doing the administration positive harm.

It is not a pleasing spectacle to see the head of a great department of the government endeavoring to build up a political machine or engaged in purely partisan work of any character.

It is far from pleasing to see him dispensing and withholding patronage in the dual role of party chairman and Cabinet officer—far from pleasing to anybody but himself.

It is neither good political morals nor good partisan politics. But it is decidedly potent in engendering resentment and adding to the troubles which beset the administration.

President Taft needs no political machine. He wants none. It is inconceivable that he has given a thought to the building up of such a machine. Everybody knows, who knows him at all, that he has no love of patronage power. The machine building is not his. It is Mr. Hitchcock's. And a sorry piece of construction it is proving to be.

If Mr. Hitchcock's activities were turned in another direction—confined to the running of the post-office affairs of the country, for instance—or if he were freed from official responsibility altogether by divorce from official life and thus permitted to give undivided attention to his national chairmanship role, we are candidly of the opinion that the administration would gain in popularity, and gain speedily. It would gain also in strength and public confidence.

Tall Men as Weaklings.

If you are short and stocky, you have cause for congratulation; if you are tall and lanky, you betide you. Sir Ernest Shackleton, in a talk before the Pilgrims of the United States, in New York the other day, said the tall man's heart was too far from his brain and his feet to make him a valued member of society. The man who got nearest the south pole has a peculiar line of reasoning, and his logic may apply south of the eighty-sixth degree south, but there are many who will take issue with him when he gets into the north temperate zone.

The argument of the south pole explorer is that it is too difficult for the heart to pump blood throughout the length of a tall man to get the best results. In the case of the short man, the heart can devote most of its efforts to its other functions, while the tall man has his strength and vitality dissipated, owing to the unusual demands made on the cardiac organ for the proper transmission of the blood.

Since there are more tall than short men, Sir Ernest will probably be called upon many times to prove his contention. He may be able to cite historical instances in his favor, but those of opposite view will also be able to quote authorities. All in all, we fear Sir Ernest is a better explorer than he is a physiologist or psychologist.

Work for the Fool Killer.

With the approach of the 1st of April, this is a good time to take an accounting and find whether the fool killer has done his duty in the closing year. We fear not.

There is a fool born every minute, and it would keep the fool killer rather busy to attend to all the cases, but he should be on the job to a greater extent than he has been of late.

The chief criticism of his work is that he has allowed the Marathon dancers to escape. This was a fad in some of the Western cities some years ago, but it soon died out, as the band that tried it went to the hospitals with nervous prostration. This year, however, the dance has become popular in many sections of the country. After a couple weeks a prize for fifteen hours' continuous waltzing, their pictures appear in the local papers, and then they are ready for competition with the winners of contests in other cities.

In Brooklyn recently four girls fell unconscious the first hour, while the others danced madly about. The winners waltzed more than five miles, and at the conclusion the girl fell unconscious and remained in that state for several hours. The reward for this sustained effort was \$25. The glory was great or small, according to different viewpoints.

With the approach of summer this form of foolishness will end, but probably some other will be devised for those who insist on doing themselves injury or court death. Unless the fool killer is more

prompt, it would be advisable to have the police exercise some supervision at Marathon dances and their like.

The Blight of the Bauble.

The Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs has submitted a report on the bill granting permission to certain officers of the United States to accept gifts from the governments of foreign states. For the first time there has been laid down some semblance of a rule which shall govern the Congressional authorization of the delivery of these testimonials. The Constitution contains a prohibition of the granting of titles of nobility, and forbids the acceptance of presents by officers of this country from foreign potentates without the consent of Congress. It has now been decided that no decoration shall be received save when it is conferred for some exceptional or extraordinarily meritorious act, and that no presents shall be received except those which may be classed as souvenirs and marks of courtesy. Accordingly, the authority has been granted for the delivery of certain presents which are considered as coming within these classes, while in some 170 instances the consent of acceptance has been refused, and this embraces all the offers of decorations.

It will surprise most people to know that so many presents and decorations are in the possession of the State Department awaiting distribution. In glancing over the list which is regarded with disfavor, one cannot help being impressed with this form of generosity as it prevails in other countries. According to the Secretary of State, there are now about 220 diplomas, decorations, medals, and other gifts in the custody of the chief clerk of that department. It is not made known what will be done with the gifts and decorations which are not bestowed, and it might easily appear to the source of such compliments that the indifference closely approaches an affront. There is no avoiding the impression, also, that some of these decorations have been given without much regard to the necessities of the circumstances described as justifying the issue. Most of the army and navy officers who are indicated as recipients simply did their duty to their own government, such as serving as military or naval attaches; and there are several instances of decorations conferred "for reasons not known." Some of the presents have a value which does not seem to be in proportion to the event they commemorate, being, for instance, in a number of cases, souvenirs of the visit of a squadron to some port. Perhaps these decorations are more appreciated abroad than they are in this country, and doubtless the gentlemen who are designated appreciate them at their true sentimental value. It is well, at all events, to have an understanding and something approaching a system by which these gifts and decorations, medals and diplomas may be accepted.

It would seem, however, to do no damage to American dignity and our traditional veneration for unadorned and untitled democracy to accept without much question all of the presents and insignia which are described in the copious list furnished to the Senate by the Department of State. Few of the gifts are of intrinsic value, and all of them are intended as compliments to representatives of the government on the part of foreign nations. It will obviously be a difficult matter to draw the line or to make distinctions, and the rejection of the 170 decorations is not needed to protect us from the corrupting and demoralizing influence of an European or an Asiatic medal or parchment. There really does not seem to be any occasion for a loss of American simplicity through the blandishment of the bauble.

Where Death Stalks.

Meeting death while on duty is an experience all humankind is exposed to, but when the Grim Reaper enters the festive hall and takes scores or hundreds of those who a moment before were laughing and chatting in the exuberance of spirits which goes with relaxation from cares and duties, the scene is one that shocks the most hardened. To those who witnessed the Iroquois disaster in Chicago six years ago or saw the burned bodies drifting away from the ill-fated Slocum, in New York Harbor, the imagination can picture the awful scene in the Hungarian village on Easter night, with half the population gathered in a great coach-house fitted up as a ballroom. The building is festooned with dry pine branches and illuminated with Chinese lanterns. The gowns of the women, naturally, are of a flimsy character. Children, with their parents, are there in soft white goods of childhood, while the dancers occupy the floor and the sides of the building are thronged with spectators.

Suddenly the dry branches and ribbons catch fire. The flames shoot up and spread so quickly that the dancers have no time to seek safety in flight. The entire room is a mass of flames, and burning embers by hundreds drop in all parts of the room. The one means of egress is clogged with humanity, their clothes ablaze and their shrieks such as only Inferno knows. Those scattered about the building rush for the single means of escape, trampling each other until, as some reports have it, fully a hundred are smothered to death under the mass of frenzied humanity. Few escape uninjured. Those at the bottom of the human pile escape the fire and may survive the bruises inflicted, unless, perforce, suffocation has ended their earthly existence.

Such transformations from scenes of gaiety to the presence of death are rare, modern history citing only five or six instances. In the Ring Theater, Vienna, 80 lives were lost; in the Paris Charity Bazaar fire the loss of life was much less, but the prominence of the victims was such as to shock the world; in America the Brooklyn Theater fire, and the burning of the Iroquois Theater, in Chicago, stand out conspicuously along with the shocking disaster to the excursionists aboard the General Slocum, in New York Harbor.

Protection against fire is reaching a higher state of perfection every year. Each calamity serves as a warning, and, in most cases, these warnings are taken and a repetition is less likely. The Iroquois Theater fire resulted in more stringent laws in practically every municipality in America, and especially in Chicago.

There have been theater panics since, but there has been no loss of life due to negligence. Such lessons sink deep into the human heart, and it is well that each one be heeded.

CHAT OF THE FORUM.

Commander Peary's Handicap.
From the Philadelphia Public Ledger.
Explorer Shackleton possesses an advantage in having no Representative Mason to bow-wow at him.

Could Not Resist Temptation.
From the Philadelphia Public Ledger.
Canada took from this country this year \$6,486,486 valuable things. They know that across the line lay the cheap steak house.

What's the Answer?
From the Chicago Inter-Ocean.
If the insurgents want to invade they will have to begin all over again. And if they do the cut, and intend to stay quit, what on earth did they insure for?

Did Not Earn Their Pay.
From the Wichita Eagle.
The battling "vanguard" of the correspondents who went up the Nile to meet Col. Roosevelt and interview him regarding American politics is a little less than 300.

Senator La Follette's Idea.
From the Boston Traveler.
Senator La Follette, in his magazine, suggests that President Taft is treading in Roosevelt's footsteps, all right, but that he is going in the opposite direction.

A Fair Comparison.
From the Albany Journal.
The Democratic party, imagining that because it elected Foss it can elect a majority of the next House, is like the man who, having had a bet on a 20-to-1 shot at the races, wags his head, and has found a short cut to wealth.

The Exception.
From the Mason Telegraph.
"No man in this country is so high that he is higher than the law," says Justice Wright, of the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia. That may have been true since March 4, 1909, but it was not quite true during the seven preceding years.

Isn't It a Shame?
From the Houston Post.
Sometimes when we gaze upon the battered old form of the Republican party, it seems almost a shame to do it what we intend to do, but when we think of its transgressions, its greed, its haggardness, and its cruelty in persecuting the saints, we just yearn for the moment when the Lord of Hosts shall hand down the imperial mandate, "See it to him."

SINCEREST SYMPATHY

For Poor Old New York and Its Deplorable Plight.
From the Kansas City Post.

FOR RENT—SUITES OF FOURTEEN ROOMS and five baths to suites of three-four rooms and two baths. Rentals, \$2,500 to \$3,000.

Have you ever seen one of those \$12,000-a-year flats?

The buildings are twelve stories high, and the apartments are arranged so that there are only one or two on a floor. Each apartment is equipped with vacuum cleaners, dressing rooms, millinery closets, plate-glass shelves, individual wine vaults, cedar-lined closets, and every earthly and unearthly thing ever invented to make of a woman a useless parasite and of a man a restless, discontented Sybarite.

There is a man in livery to open the big front door. A man in livery to turn the magnificent elevator. There are servants' quarters up under the roof and there is an individual automobile garage in the basement for every individual flat. What would you take to have to give up your home—your real home, with a yard for the baby to play in, and a porch for the dog to consider his bailiwick, and room enough on the hearthstone for the old gray cat, and a place up in the garret to hang your old fishing pole, and a corner in the basement to put the littlest boy's sled and the biggest girl's roller skates?

For Rent—Suites of fourteen rooms and five baths. Rentals, \$5,500 to \$12,000.

Do you know what signs ought to go up alongside of that one?

For Rent—An empty heart.

For Rent—A vacant brain.

For Rent—An idle life.

Keep your \$12,000-a-year flat, New York. Build all of them you want. Set them up in rows along Riverside Drive as a light-hearted child sets up his blocks along the ledge of his nursery window.

Fill up your apartment houses, your \$12,000-a-year flats, with \$12,000-a-year people. Pack 'em in, crowd 'em in, push 'em in fifty deep if you have to, a hundred deep if you must. They're nothing but corpses, those big flats, anyway. Keep them in your own yard, poor, little old New York. We don't want 'em out West, where the real people live—the real people who'd rather have a little four-room cottage with a yard and an old walnut tree at the corner of the house, and a rose face at the window, than all the \$12,000-a-year flats in the world.

An Exaggeration.

From the Newark News.

In a Florida town a visitor from the North hailed a native.

"What's the matter with the people here?" he asked. "What are you all running so hard for?"

"Can't stop to talk, stranger," the man answered over his shoulder as he rushed on.

Men dashed out of their stores, slammed the doors, and sprinted up the street, some in aprons, some in their shirt sleeves. An epidemic of madness seemed to have struck the place.

The town policeman stammered along at last. Policemen never hurry.

"What's wrong?" the stranger asked.

"Ain't nothing wrong," said the policeman. "The railroad agent just got a telegram that the down express is comin' through in a few minutes with snow on the roof, and the boys have gone to fetch their families down to the depot to see the sight."

Too Concentrated.

From the Cleveland Leader.

"I am always cool in the face of danger," he boasted proudly.

When the crisis came, we are obliged to acknowledge that he told the truth: The only objection was that his coolness was all in his feet.

In 1922—Perhaps.

From an Exchange.

Daughter—Have you voted, mamma?

Mother—No; your father and I paired.

THE GARDEN OF FORGIVENESS.

There is a garden, far, far away,

Kept for the souls who sinned and suffered most.

The sword of God forever guards the way.

And round its borders camps a heavenly host.

A gentle wind breathes through the tufted grass,

Rich with the scent of roses and their bloom;

And with the wind, all this and sorrow pass,

Leaving a sweet contentment in their room.

Here are no troubles; here are none that weep;

Here come no thoughts of sadness or despair;

But faintest dew in fullest beauty deep;

And softest sunlight dreams upon the air.

The murmurings of fountain, low and sweet,

Forever fill the ear and move the soul;

Soothing the silence with a gentle beat.

Like kindly voices, speaking words of peace.

And here, forever and forever, rest

The weary souls, mist of their life's blood;

And cured hearts are here forever blest;

And woe and heartache are made all within.

—Bertrand Russell, in "The Human Condition."

A LITTLE NONSENSE.

IN THE GAME.
Fresh breezes sweep,
And briskly keep;
The dust upon the move;
And bursts of rain.
Drench all the plain,
The city and the grove.

On every hand
We see the land
Emerge from nature's drowse.
What means this thing?
Oh, Mother Spring,
Is busy cleaning house.

Ever Notice?
"I see you have a portfolio to carry your papers in. Now you look like a real lawyer."
"What other sort of lawyer is there?"
"Well, there's the stage lawyer. He carries his papers in his hat."

A Modest Order.
"What shall we order?"
"Something cheap."
"All right, waiter, bring us some mock bean soup."

The Latest.
From bad to worse the poet goes; he now prints verse disguised as prose.

Fresh Paint.
Oaks and willows all about,
Show a trace of greenery;
Nature has her artists out
Touching up the scenery.

Bound to Happen.
"I'm overwhelmed with company."
"Well, it's my own fault. I brought it on myself by going visiting."

An Old Cry.
"Why should you insist that the world is round?" demanded they.
"Why shouldn't I?" asked Columbus.
"It's this way. You might hurt business."

MOUNT ETNA'S ERUPTIONS.

From the Philadelphia Public Ledger.

The fear of Etna among those who dwell in the neighborhood of the mountain is much older than the time of Virgil, who writes of the volcano vomiting cinders and fire as high as the stars, or of Ovid, who speaks of Etna's effort to throw off the earth and thrust aside cities and mountains. Dante first denied that the manifestations of activity on the part of the burning mountain were due to the agonized efforts of an imprisoned giant to make his escape. Between the eruption described by Pindar, that took place in 475 B. C., and the present outbreak there is historic record of more than eighty eruptions, and as one ascends the gradual slope that leads to the summit (at 14,300 feet above the sea) the devastation due to eruptions in 1683, 1857, 1869, 1886, and other years is evident in the dreary waste of stunted broom-bush and patches of cactus against the tortuous masses of the lava beds.

There are more than 200 smaller cones upon the flanks of Etna, some of these reaching a height of 700 feet. The principal crater at the summit is upon a terrace marking the probable site of a great cone destroyed in the early eruption. The "Val del Bove," on the eastern slope, is an amphitheater with walls some 3,000 feet high, affording a remarkable cross-section view of the inner structure of the volcano.

In winter the summit is snow-clad; in sequestered places the snow remains all the year round, but where it is exposed it melts in the fierce heat of the Sicilian summer. When the mantle of the snow is removed the shoulders of the mountain present repellent vistas of volcanic ashes and lava, but the distant view is magnificent. Below the barren mountain-top there is a zone of forest, with pine, poplar, beech, and oak trees, and at the base between the mountain—which monopolizes the eastern end of Sicily—and the Mediterranean is a belt of luxuriant vegetation, made all the more fertile by the volcanic dust, and from two to eleven miles in width, producing the cultivated crops of grain, fruit, wine, and oil.

In the eruption of A. D. 1164 the city of Catania, to the south, was destroyed, with its 15,000 inhabitants. In 1872 two villages were buried, and many lives were lost; in 1893 a town of 10,000 people was destroyed. Catania, overwhelmed 20,000 people. In 1852 there was a violent eruption; dust fell in showers over the adjacent region, and two new fissures—one of two miles in length—were opened on the side of the mountain. The eruption of 1864-65 had no serious consequences, but in May, 1879, the lava destroyed an extensive area under cultivation. There were other eruptions in 1886 and 1892, and Etna was in malignant sympathy with the earthquake shock that destroyed Messina last year, though it was the earthquake and not the volcano that was responsible for the catastrophe.

The town of Nicolosi, endangered by the present eruption, has about 3,000 inhabitants, and lies on the mountainside some 2,300 feet above sea level. Its houses are all of one story, with wooden roofs, for the inhabitants have a wholesome dread of earthquakes. It is the usual starting point for the ascent of the volcano, and it has the misfortune to lie directly in the channel from which the lava stream is likely to flow toward the city of Catania. It has often been destroyed and partly buried by the stream current. The region above the town is described by a recent traveler as "one vast ash pit," with scarcely a growing plant in a radius of half a mile. Gladstone in 1838 ascended the mountain from this village, and has graphically described his experience.

In 1886 a lava stream started for Catania (now a city of 150,000 inhabitants) from a point about four miles above Nicolosi, at the rate of 50 or 60 yards an hour. The sun was darkened and all the people of Eastern Sicily stopped work and sought the churches or paraded the streets bearing religious emblems and praying aloud. The lava moved more and more slowly, and at last it traveled at the rate of only two yards an hour, but it seemed as though no power on earth could save Nicolosi. The archbishop of Catania therefore visited the village, in his state carriage drawn by two white horses, taking with him the holy linen veil of St. Agatha, the most sacred relic of his cathedral. After the veil was exhibited in a chapel on the mountainside the stream of lava, it is asserted, divided, but a part of the stream continued to flow in the direction of the town, and the inhabitants gave up all hope. Taking with them all their possessions, even to the floorboards of their little houses, they sought the lower slopes, nearer the sea; but when within 1,000 feet of the town the lava flow was arrested, as the simple villagers aver to this day, by the miraculous eleventh-hour intervention of St. Agatha. Apparently the people of Nicolosi will need all their faith to sustain them in the present crisis.



Representative Julius Kahn took advantage of the latitude of the House rules last Saturday and delivered an address on the "Muckrakers of Other Days." In the course of his address, the actor-statesman said he was reminded of an incident that occurred in the city of Sacramento, in 1885, during a session of the California legislature. Maj. McLaughlin, a well-known citizen of the State, was at the Capitol, looking after some pending legislation. One morning there appeared in one of the San Francisco papers an article which reflected upon the good name of a reputable citizen of Oakland, charging that the gentleman in question was gathering a large corruption fund in order to defeat certain legislation then being considered.

Indignant at the attack, the citizen wired Maj. McLaughlin as follows: "Brand the article in this morning's paper, false as it is. Such tactics will act as a boomerang. I am coming up this evening."

Whereupon, Maj. McLaughlin promptly wired back: "I have looked all over Sacramento, but I cannot find 'false as it is' branding iron. I would like to help you propel the boomerang, but I do not know just in which direction to throw it. Keep trapper, old man. To-day's papers are lost in starting to-morrow's fires."

Crowds continue to pour into the Capitol and the guides are making up for a poor winter. Among the many visitors, women are largely in the majority, and at one time yesterday there were so many of them in the Senate galleries that they were obliged to go into the sections reserved for the men in order to get seats. The guides are told stories of every description by their patrons and often they are promised souvenirs.

Sometimes the promises are made good, but more often they are forgotten. In the rotunda is a large oil painting of the surrender of Burgoyne at Saratoga in 1777. At the left of the picture is a large tree. One of the guides was escorting a party of sightseers, and among them were three men from Schuylerville, N. Y. When they saw the painting of the surrender, they remarked that they knew the tree, well and that each had a cane made from a limb of the same tree. They, as many others had done, promised the guide that they would send him a piece of the tree for the same purpose, but he hasn't as yet received the historical piece of wood.

Three rings at the Senate elevator notified the conductor that a Senator is in waiting, and the car must get to the point at once. A Capitol visitor, a fine looking man, was in the subway, and wanting to go up to the floor, proceeded to give the bell three sharp rings. The elevator came scooting down and the conductor was amazed to find, not a Senator, but one of the common people at the door. "You shouldn't ring that bell three times," said he, or the elevator. "Why not?" asked the man. "Because, that is a Senator's ring, and no one else is allowed to use it." "Well, what do you think of that, not allowed to ring an elevator bell, except as laid down by rule," curiously responded the man. "Say, I helped make Senator Blank. Tell him I want to see him. I'll see about this nonsense."

Representative Martin, the near insurgent from South Dakota, is a rapid firing orator of high caliber. When he gets going, the official stenographers have to shove the pencil at a fearful rate. A small, wiry man, Mr. Martin never knows when to stop, and he hasn't any sympathy for the knights of the pencil. The seat of the late Justice Brewer is immediately at the left of that of the Chief Justice. It is draped in heavy black, as a mark of respect for his memory.

After a short session yesterday, the Senate, by a resolution of Senator Curtis, adjourned out of respect to the memory of the late Justice Brewer. This was the second time this session that the body had adjourned at the death of a justice of the Supreme Court and the fourth time in the history of that body, the other occasions being at the death of James G. Blaine, an ex-Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Justice Bradley.

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STARS AND DOLLARS.

A Certain Rich Man's Fortune Compared to the Milky Way.
Garrett P. Service, in New York American.

I was looking at the Milky Way the other night, when a curious thought came to me, suggested by what the newspapers have been printing about a tremendous eleemosynary "foundation" which a certain marvelously rich American wishes to establish with his name and fortune. I asked myself: "How do the hosts of the stars of heaven compare in number with that man's dollars?"

Well, the census of the starry sky is concerned almost entirely with the Milky Way. The number of stars not connected with it is negligible of no greater relative importance than the bank account of a corner grocer compared with the vast accumulations of the creator of the proposed great foundation. But when you look